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Educators and citizens are exhorted not to lose sight of or to confuse the real issues of racial segregation in the schools with the other peripheral issues. Through the short-sightedness of many and the recklessness of some, good policies of education are now being turned one against the other, bringing the cause of integration into a collision course with the quality of education. Issues examined include the neighborhood school, mobile classrooms, compensatory education, and the use of school buses. Decisions concerning any of these must necessarily be given less emphais than the total issue of whether the challenge of school integration is being met head on. Several suggestions are offered relative to the implementation this policy: lower the age at which the public schools may serve culturally disadvantaged children; provide cultural enrichment programs for them; extend the daily and yearly operating schedules of the public schools; encourage parents to be partners in the educational endeavour rather than interested onlookers; form active alliances with all community resources, and create a corps of outstanding teachers for schools where the culturally disadvantaged are congregated.

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# What Are the Flanking Skirmishes?

# What Is the Fundamental Struggle?

By FRANCIS KEPPEL

*Schoolmen have found in U. S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel an effective leader in the area of civil rights. His strong views are expressed with refreshing wit, candor, and common sense. His actions are in harmony with his words.*

*The* KAPPAN *is pleased to publish the brief speech Commissioner Keppel made at the National Education Association convention in Seattle last July.*

LET us in the educational family look with boldness and candor at the particulars of civil rights and education, of segregation and our schools—the schools which are administered and in which we teach in the name of American democracy.

At the outset, let us be clear about segregation.

Whether it be blatant in the South or subtle in the North, it saps and diminishes democracy and justice. Whether it exists by law or by custom, by edict or by tradition, by patterns of unemployment or patterns of housing, segregation hurts all children, Negro and white alike.

Nowhere is this damage more devastating than in education for democracy.

Therefore I say that the war against segregation is education's war, that it is a single war, but that all too often it is waged on flanks which are secondary to our objective: the elimination of racial discrimination in our schools.

Segregation in our schools was outlawed in its blatant forms in 1954 by the decision of the Supreme Court. But in its subtler forms it calls upon us in education for decision and commitment, for the wisdom to detect the spurious issues from the genuine, the flanking skirmishes from the fundamental struggle.

Today, these flanking forays are taking place in curious sectors—over neighborhood schools, over mobile classrooms, over compensatory education, and even over the use of a school bus.

These secondary issues confuse and divide and frustrate. They lead citizens of good will, teachers of good will, to take passionate stands on one side or the other—and to forget what the enemy is and where the enemy stands.

Through the shortsightedness of many and the recklessness of some, good and allied policies of education are now being turned one against another, bringing the cause of integration into a collision course with the quality of education.

Let us examine these flanking skirmishes which lead us away from the prime objectives of quality education and the equality of educational opportunity.

There is the flank of *the neighborhood school.*

In some cities, the neighborhood school has been used as an instrument to perpetuate segregation, turning the struggle for integration into a condemnation of the neighborhood school and all its works.

To be sure, some who extoll the neighborhood school do so because they abhor integration. But many who defend the neighborhood school genuinely desire a school sensibly close to home.

So conflict arises. Positions are taken. Motives are impugned. And a smoke screen goes up to protect the enemy.

Yet the neighborhood school and the integrated school are not incompatible. Both are good. They should go hand in hand whenever possible.

If we must choose between them, I choose integration. But why must we choose? We must



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work for both integration and the neighborhood school simultaneously. We must achieve each to the greatest degree possible.

There is the flank of *the mobile classroom.* In some cities, portable extensions—mobile classrooms—merely enlarge the segregated school, expanding and containing the ghettos of education, turning our struggle for integration into another skirmish. This isn't mobility. This is merely anchoring the *status quo.*

But mobile classrooms *can* be used as integrated pre-school centers and reading centers. They can be used for these services, as an instrument toward integration.

The misuse of mobile classrooms does not make them bad in themselves any more than the misuse of neighborhood schools makes them bad in themselves.

The mobile classroom and integrated education are not incompatible. The mobile classroom can play a useful, affirmative role.

If we must choose, I choose integration. But why must we choose? Let us use mobile classrooms to achieve a greater degree of integration and quality education.

There is the flank of *compensatory education*—a high-quality, high-intensity program of the very best education we can provide for those who need it most—the children of discrimination, poverty, and neglect.

In some cities, compensatory education, like the neighborhood school and the mobile classroom, is misused, is employed as an excuse to put off and postpone integration. And our struggle for integration is once again turned into a senseless flanking fight.

Yet compensatory education and integrated education are not incompatible. They are logical, effective paths to precisely the same objective. But here, once more, they have been represented as two sides of an argument, and we are maneuvered into taking senseless positions.

If we must choose, I choose integration. But why must we choose? We need both compensatory education *and* integrated education at one and the same time.

There is, finally, the flank of *"busing"**—and here the smoke screen is densest of all.

Busing is an unfortunate word. It has been used in unfortunate ways.

When those who oppose integration speak of busing, they almost always paint a picture of school children traveling for hours and hours and miles and miles until there is little time or appetite left for school. Such trips to nowhere are not envisioned by the most ardent supporters of busing.

A school bus, of course, is a means of transportation, and transportation is a means of getting children to school. It can also be a logical, reasonable way to increase integration in some of our cities. But a school bus is not a policy or a panacea. The question remains: What is the most effective approach to desegregation in a given city, in a given school system?

If we must choose between segregated schools and the school bus as a vehicle toward integration, then we must choose for the school bus and see that it is headed in the right direction. And we must head in the right direction ourselves—to end for all time the blight of segregation wherever it exists and in whatever forms and shapes it assumes.

When the enemy becomes the neighborhood school policy, when the enemy becomes compensatory education, when—in an ultimate kind of madness—the enemy becomes the school itself, segregation gains and all of us lose.

By turning once and for all from these distracting, negative issues, we shall find in the cause of civil rights and the cause of education an alliance that can be strengthened and will prevail.

Now what shall we ask of our schools? What should we seek affirmatively from education to meet our responsibility and the challenge presented to us by civil rights? I will suggest a few as stimulus to thought and action. Other practical ideas will come, but the important thing now is to begin.

*First,* if we would cancel out the immediate effects of discrimination and poverty, I suggest that we must lower the age limits at which our public schools may serve these children. The choice in the real sense is not whether this effort should be expanded in their behalf but when.

*So spelled in violation of the rules, to avoid contamination of the more pleasant word "busing."—*The Editor*

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MR. KEPPEL *(Iota 719) was appointed U. S. Commissioner of Education late in 1962 after fourteen years as dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Since passage of the civil rights bill, Commissioner Keppel has moved rapidly to carry out the new responsibilities it has placed upon his office.*

KEPPEL

If we in education begin our work with three- and four-year-olds, with nursery school classes, we have a powerful chance to be influential in canceling out deprivations that will otherwise affect every aspect of their lives. If we wait to act until they reach the third grade, or the sixth grade, or the eighth grade, our prognosis for success is dramatically diminished. Then we must deal with negative attitudes toward learning which can defeat all our efforts.

*Second,* we must rid ourselves of unfounded assumptions about the level of interest and exposure to the world which children of inequality bring with them to school. Far too often, we have followed conventional middle-class views as to what these children know or should know, what their level of experience is or should be. These viewpoints have had devastating effects upon our teaching efforts.

This is another new role these schools should play: to broaden and enrich these children's horizons of experience in every area, from the world of art and music to the world of nature and science and work. Again, it is a matter of providing more than equal resources to make up for inequality, not merely the same resources we provide in other schools.

*Third,* our concept of the "normal" school day and the "normal" school year is due, long overdue, for a change. Just as we should lower the age limit for these children when we assume responsibility for their education, so should we expand the school day from its usual operating hours of 8 o'clock to 3:30, its operating months of September to June. If we are to make up for educational inequality of the past—by enriching and broadening school experiences, by providing after-hours study halls or concerts or seminars, by offering classes in adult education—then these schools must be open far more than they are today, open for twelve or fourteen hours a day, perhaps open for twelve months out of the year. We need resourcefulness and a sense of mission to use these schools as they can be used—as a full-time resource for the whole community.

*Fourth,* we must search out parents as partners in our educational enterprise with an intensity unmatched in the history of education. Whatever brave programs we fashion for these children, whatever new courses and approaches we offer them, our hope for success will be greatly diminished without the active interest and motivation and partnership of their parents. So, clearly, we must form a firm and working alliance between the school and the home.

*Fifth,* our schools must also form active alliances with all community resources—social agencies; neighborhood groups; labor, business, and civic leaders—and on a level and in depth unparalleled to this time. The day when these schools have been isolated and apart from the community they serve must come to an end. The day of close working relationships between the school and all community resources—both volunteer and professional groups—must now begin. A common enemy requires a unification of forces, not a battalion of generals riding off in every direction.

*Sixth,* and most important, we need to create a corps of outstanding teachers for these schools, teachers who are trained and gifted in teaching these children. All too often, teaching our deprived children has seemed a personal deprivation to the teachers we have sent to their classroom. They are usually unfamiliar with the home and community life of their students, unaccustomed to youngsters who come to school from families where books and learning are often strangers, where the daily struggle for livelihood blots out the long-term struggle for educational attainment.

The successful teacher of these children needs warmth and insight which no legislative act can accomplish. These qualities must be in her at the outset. But they can be lost or blunted if those in charge of our schools fail to encourage and stimulate these qualities. They are education's rarest treasure. We must look for these teachers perceptively, recognize their worth, and support in them the spirit of challenge and high adventure which their assignment so uniquely deserves.

### Partnership with Civil Rights Movement

Essential to our success in the years ahead is a working partnership between education and the civil rights movement. In carrying forward our present momentum for change, we can expect that there will be strains and stresses and initial misunderstandings. But these creative tensions are always vital to the process of progress.

Educators and the public at large will be wrong if they view school boycotts and parents' marches as indications of a fundamental division between the schools and the civil rights movement. And civil rights leaders will also be wrong if they forget the positive purpose of such protests, if they allow these creative tensions to degenerate into destructive hostility.

There is a natural alliance in the cause of education and the cause of civil rights. We must preserve it and foster it. Then, together, we shall shape new dimensions of democracy for all our children and for our children's children.